

Priest-in-Charge Report **Submitted April 19, 2022**

1. **We have Arrived:** At the point in the process of transition where some folks believe it would be best if the Priest-in-Charge would crawl back into the hole he/she came from and disappear. I get that, and I wish I could make things easier. Some of the "crazy" (change crazy to church if you wish) ways of doing things can seem pedantic or overly formal. They may be.

Read over the information that Heather left us. I would not be talking about this unless I needed to talk about this.

I would suggest that we do some work on open-mindedness.

- * The Church is not the building. God is not the building. The Church meets in the building. The building should serve the church not the other way around.
- * Survival is not a mission. The mission is of God. If the mission is not of God, it is not a mission.
- * Furniture is not as important as new folks finding their faith in God and their home in our Church.
- * If we begin a sentence with "we've never, or we used to" we may find ourselves closed to change.
- * Remember that a parachute works well unless it is not open.

2. **One More Time** Committee's function under the authority of the Vestry. They are appointed by the Rector with affirmation of the vestry. No Committee can exist without appointment and affirmation.

Committees include (at the present time)

- Executive Committee
- Finance Committee
- Stewardship Committee
- Buildings and Grounds Committee
- Intersection150 Committee
- Search Committee

Committee's function under their mission or charge given to them by the Vestry. Only the vestry can modify that charge. Only the Rector can appoint the chair and members of committees. Committees should make a report to the vestry every time they meet. That report may be submitted by the chairperson of the Committee or by the Vestry liaison to that Committee.

A Ministry Group is basically a committee that operates with the support and supervision of the Rector. The Rector appoints the chairperson and members, and the Vestry affirms. The Rector helps the group to write their mission and the group cannot change its chairperson, membership or mission without the permission of the rector. Ministry groups also report to the vestry after each meeting.

Ministry Groups include:

- Diversity
- Pastoral Care and Hospitality (with sub-groups Tuesday lunch and OSL)
- Outreach
- Technology
- Worship

The Vestry is not a committee, and no committee (ministry group) work should take place at a vestry meeting. Groups that need policy, money, guidance (permission) from the Vestry bring that to the Vestry via their report. A recommendation from a committee is a "motion" that must be decided by the vestry.

Questions?

3. **Communication** I believe that the parish needs to speak with one clear message and with one voice. Generally, the Rector is the only person to speak on behalf of the parish. This was easy years ago when parish statements and material were mailed from one location under the signature of the rector. Now days many people can add information to the website, FB page (or other social media) or send out email using an address in which they speak for the whole congregation. Speaking for the congregation takes on legal liabilities which fall on the Rector and Vestry. The Vestry and Rector (as individuals) can be sued for what is said and done on their behalf.

I believe it is critically important that nothing is sent out on behalf of the congregation that I have not personally approved. This authority should not be questioned and is in the best interests of the parish at large. That way the Vestry can be fully aware that the Rector and only the Rector is to blame if something is sent out that may cause harm to someone or is simply incorrect.

4. **Vestry on-call** I submit to you my desire to place the Vestry on-call for the months of June and August. We will plan to meet in July. This gives everyone a break and allows all of us to plan for time-off with family. However, if an issue garner's the need a meeting will be held, and it may be necessary to call a meeting.

5. **Hybrid Meetings are Confusing** A hybrid meeting is when 8 people gather face-to-face and one or more people are present via electronic means. Possible yes, confusing yes and I am doubtful as to the equity and fairness of such a meeting. The person who connects remotely cannot see everyone, nor can they observe the occasional non-verbal communication, or speech not loud enough to be broadcast over our setup. I will not allow hybrid meetings. This sounds harsh, but every member of the vestry needs to be treated equally, and a person who is not physically present is not.

If two or more members inform me that they will only be able to be present by remote means, then I will call the meeting via electronic means with the expectation that every person will connect 'individually' via electronic means. The clerk will also include any person watching the meeting through any connection.

6. **Suggestion** We have a great deal of expensive and beautiful vestments. I would estimate our vestments alone would be worth over \$100,000.00 to replace. Yet we keep them in old less than beautiful metal wardrobes. That reminds me of putting a beautiful diamond on a pot-metal shank (I grew up in the jewelry business). So, I would ask that the vestry propose to the Altar Guild that new wardrobes or built-in cupboards should be constructed for clergy and lay vestments so that the quality and beauty of our vestments may be preserved with dignity.

Suggestion 2 Purple is no longer the color for Lent or Advent. Purple can be used as a secondary color. I would suggest that the vestry or Altar Guild consider the purchase of a new Lenten Array (an off-white flax color) used for Lent. It is to remind people of the barren wilderness of rocks. During Lent brass is replaced by pottery, wood or glass. All Silver is not used. Rich colors are eliminated and replaced by drab and earth-tones. Displays in front of the altar or other areas, like our two chapels, would include rocks and natural grass etc.

(note in passing, it is a courtesy, when the rector makes a suggestion, to at least discuss it or ask questions. I suspect most priests know that their vestry will not "love" everything they suggest, however, it is kind and respectful to at least think about it. In this case, the vestry has choices... it could authorize study or expenditure or send it to a committee (in this case worship) or do nothing.

7. **Comcast (Technology – Warning don't read if it gives you a headache)**

Comcast updated the firmware on their modem/router. This caused a change in the DNS (Domain Name System) inside our sub-net (the network inside the church) which assigns an IP (Internet Protocol) number to each entity connected within the church. Some entities like a refrigerator, have names along with numbers. The number may look like: 10.1.10.5 and the name could be Cold Box. The firmware update did a number on our system in that stopped all internal communication and messed up our phone system, which uses the Internet as a highway.

This event caused us to be off-line one Sunday of live-streaming and made it impossible to answer the phones for a week. With some costly assistance from the phone company, we can answer our phones if people are patient. We also have made work-a-rounds so that our server is working and our live streaming works again. To say that I am not a fan of Comcast is a major understatement. However, they are totally uninterested in my thoughts.

When you call the church, you will get the answering machine EVERY time. You then must either "dial" the correct extension or wait. After about 10 seconds, the phones in the building will ring and your call will be answered.

8. **Database** Before the next Rector arrives, I believe we should work on our database of members of St. Paul's. It appears we have many folks who are not part of our community of faith or have not been for many years. The membership rules

are quite outdated and attendance via live streaming was simply not possible. My recommendation is as follows:

We develop the following categories:

Active Members (makes 3 communions a year on Sunday)

Inactive Members (does not make 3 communions a year)

Active and Inactive Members assume the individual is baptized.

Baptized Member (generally, children under 16)

Attending

Attending but not communicant

Clergy

I do not think it wise to indicate to inactive members that they are inactive members. An inactive member needs to attend a service (normally 3) in order to regain active membership.

Questions?

9. Kitchen, we have a commercial kitchen. By the health laws of the state of Michigan, we could lose our license because we do not have an individual with the correct credentials to operate our kitchen. Those credentials include passage of a course of instruction by the County Health department. If we would lose our license, we would lose our insurance relating to any accidents that could befall anyone who works in our kitchen or anyone who complains of food borne illness resulting in eating anything from our kitchen.

10. General Convention Although shorter, and smaller, the 80th General Convention of the Episcopal Church will meet in Baltimore, MD in early July. At this writing, I am not sure my presence will be needed as I am an alternate and not a Deputy. If one of the clergy deputies does not attend, I will be summoned. Typically, one Alternate in both orders attends from each Diocese, but this GC is now bound to be quite different.

Of interest to St. Paul's is pending legislation that would allow a certain amount of flexibility in how a parish pays clergy and lay health insurance. If passed in the house of deputies and house of bishops, parishes would be allowed to provide insurance from a different plan if it is identical to the plan proposed by the diocese. Further, the parish would have some liability of the plan purchased by the parish, outside of the church insurance, did not provide adequate assistance to the clergyperson or lay employee. As you might think, the proposal is very complex. At any rate, the new arrangement would not take place in 1 JAN 23 which may mean November 23 for 2024.

A new President and Vice-President of the House of Deputies will be elected. There is also some new legislation (canonical change) dealing with the manner in which two Dioceses may cease and become a new Diocese. Not something I would read while trying to stay awake, but it may impact on the creation a diocese of the middle mitten Michigan.

10. **Inquiry** Are we all receiving emails? Have we followed the directions and no longer are received and placed in the SPAM or JUNK folder? Are we able to read the documents posted online for each vestry meeting?

I am in my 9th month at St. Paul's, and I am not sure that folks are reading material sent to them. If you are having trouble, please let me know. I can make a pastoral call on your computer. 😊

Blessings to you and thank you for your continued support. I look forward to the dinner on Saturday night, and all our activities on Saturday and Sunday.

Yours faithfully,